/374 cont./

369 [438] became a relatively flourishing commercial center; each year more than 20,000 metric tons of groundnuts were handled by the traders of the place and sent by railroad to the ports of Rufisque or Dakar. As early as 1907 the first work on the Thiès-[496] Kayes railroad was begun. All of this new economic activity [464] required the employment of many laborers, who were in part recruited on the spot, but also in the neighboring villages.

369 162 During the dry season, work in the fields is reduced. A number of rural people in the vicinity come to offer their services as workers in the factoreries (2) or in the newly opened [464]

[443] 2. Factorerie: shop where everything is sold.

[461] yards /chantiers, dockyards, woodyards, etc./. Some of these villagers feel that this kind of work is less arduous and more remunerative than that of agriculture. They become definitively attached to urban life and come to swell the population of the native quarters previously established.

[484] [22] Others return every evening to the village. During the rainy season they leave their urban job and devote all their activity to work in the fields.

During this whole period prior to the Great War the suburban village seems to have played the role of intermediary or rather of relay-station between the hamlet in the bush and the city. The call for non-specialized labor had echos not [464] only in the outskirts /375/ of the city itself, but also in the more distant villages. Curiosity about new things, the opportunity to escape familial [illegible]elage, and especially the promise of relatively high earnings stimulated some immigration movement toward the escales.

[574] By means of the great hospitality that he knows will be shown him by relatives or friends who live in Diakhaté or Keur-Issa-Bambara, the rural person settles in these agglomerations.

/375 cont./

369 He works the lougan (1) of his host; after a few months he
166
[574]
425
[622]

1. Lougan; a Wolof term signifying a cultivated field.

obtains a little grant of land from the head of the village; he builds a hut, and often his family joins him and comes to share his life. Diakhaté and Keur-Issa-Bambara grow. The new settler takes advantage of the inactivity that the dry season imposes on him by offering his services temporarily to the urban establishments. Each year he divides his activities, which become half-urban, half-rural. If stable employment is offered to him in the city, he leaves the care of his lougan to his family and devotes himself entirely to
[484] his new activity. For a few months he will accept this daily travel, but he has no deep attachment in the village that welcomed him earlier; tired of his long daily journeys, perhaps also pushed by a kind of pride in becoming a city dweller, he will finally, he and his family, leave the rural life and settle in the huts of the native quarters of Thiés.

369 241 Perhaps he retained a little lougan in the village? His family will come to maintain it each year. Perhaps he exchanged it for a field located in the vicinity of his new establishment? In general, because of a kind of peasant atavism, he always keeps a little bit of ground near his
[454] quarter. The harvest will give some protection against possible shortages; the sale of the products of the soil will be a considerable balance when enforced idleness or lack of money occurs.

369 621 The period of the maximum development of Keur-Issa-Bambara is set by the old people in the decade 1910-1920. This swelling of the population often required splitting the village in two. For reasons of familial misunderstandings or the necessity of being nearer to fields too far away, this disassociation was brought about in several hamlets (at

/386 cont./

369 two important roles in the economy of the escale: it is a re-
464 serve of workers who can be employed temporarily; it is also
166 the position of withdrawal when enforced idleness and strikes interdict work in the city.

[463] A functional examination of the different human groups has in fact revealed that an important proportion of the male elements has a hybrid occupation: half-agricultural, half-laborer. These workers fluctuating between two activities seem like a shock troop of laborers who are employed on the occasion of great undertakings: embankments for the laying of the road from Dakar to Thiès, putting through and establishing new streets, the installation of the military camps, the extraction of phosphate in the Péchiney quarries... The yard closed, they temporarily return to the land.

These villages are also withdrawal points in case of prolonged work stoppages. If the worker is discharged from his establishment, if he suffers from enforced idleness in his occupation, is he totally deprived of money? He knows that he will [574] be able to wait for better times thanks to the hospitality that he will find in the neighboring agglomeration. Settled near the escale, it will be possible for him to look for work every day.

369 Reserve of manpower, reserve of food products intended principally for the native, these are the two points that justify the term suburb given to these few villages.

Their external appearance and their internal organization as we have described it scarcely correspond to our Western view of the suburban phenomenon. But we should place this problem in its African milieu where the conceptions of the city, animal breeding, agriculture... profoundly differ from ours.

How long will this type of suburb of the African cities preserve this rural appearance? Evolution in the modes /387/ of settlement, in interior comfort, in the extension of new crops..., already primed in some villages, will progressively continue in the neighboring agglomerations.

In spite of appearances, modifications occur rapidly

7:Crowder J-5 (1955-1958) 1959
MS37 Senegal MS37
Wolof MS30

me. Diop, Faye, one of his friends, who was secretary to the local theatre, and I sat round the large bowl eating with spoons. A number of people passed, and one old man came in to watch us.

'That's our Griot,' Diop told me. A Griot is a member of a special caste, to be found in the Jollof and Mandinka tribes, who sings, drums, dances and tells jokes—a sort of family jester.

He started to talk in rapid Jollof and soon Diop and his friend were in hoots of laughter. For his pains the bowl of rice was handed to him, and another man who joined him.

'Who is he?' I asked.

'Another relation. I have to feed him,' Diop replied.

'One of the greatest problems in Dakar,' an official of IFAN had told me, 'is parasitism. A man will come to Dakar and get himself a good job, say at ten pounds a month. He has his immediate family to look after. Then along comes a cousin, and installs himself. An uncle from the bush comes to stay three days, decides he likes Dakar and fails to return to his village. A man like this may find he is supporting between eight and fifteen dependants.'

'I suppose that explains why Dakar's population is much larger than opportunities for work would justify?'

'Yes. It's a great problem, because it prevents any accumulation of capital by Africans. People complain that there is no African bourgeoisie here, that all the trade is in the hands of Lebanese and small Frenchmen. It's largely because an African here cannot, by the laws of hospitality, refuse to give a bed and food to his fellow tribesmen.'

'Of course, in a way that's a good thing, because no one goes hungry, and it's one way of redistributing wealth voluntarily. A sort of voluntary welfare state.'

'Yes, but if the African is to control the economy of his own economy, he must be rid of this scourge.'

In Gorée I met a Frenchman to whom Senegalese soldiers used to come immediately after their discharge from the Army to leave all their new clothes and money, otherwise they would have returned to the town to hear: 'Oh, you are the most wonderful, most bountiful man alive.' After that there would have been little left of their money.

Diop was perhaps a classic example of parasitism. He himself was a borrower, only to have other people borrowing from him.

/92 cont./

369 166 [162] All of the new elements that swell the urban quarters are young elements coming from the country; 32% of the population is made up of young people less than 14 years of age (15) whom the so-called facilities of the city have

15. In France this percentage is 24%, the figure estimated according to the census statistics given in the review Population, Oct.-Dec. 1954, p. 718.

attracted. The countryside is being drained of its energetic elements and the city does not have enough work to give to [464] [574] those who come to settle there. A class of idlers and parasites is forming little by little, living on either the generous African hospitality or by expedients. This aspect of the social problem of the large African cities is one of the more urgent to be solved.

369 168 The public authorities are disturbed by this enormous swelling of the urban populations, which far exceeds the actual needs. It seems that none of the methods adopted up to now for decreasing them /93/ have given appreciable results. Perhaps the efforts that are now being made to improve the conditions of rural life and promote some modernization of agricultural techniques will allow the economic capacity of the countryside to increase and will curb the rural exodus. Greater stability among the urban population would then permit the establishment of more coherent and better balanced social structures.

Georges Savonnet.